



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Healthcare Associated Infections

##### What is a Healthcare Associated Infection?

A healthcare associated infection (HAI) is an infection that a person acquires while they are in a healthcare facility receiving treatment for other conditions. HAIs are also known as hospital infections or nosocomial infections.

There are many types of HAIs and they are often categorized by the part of the body where they occur:

- Central line associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the bloodstream through a central line.
- Catheter associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the urinary tract through a catheter.
- *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI or *C. difficile*) - An infection in the intestines or bowel that is caused by *Clostridium difficile* bacteria.
- Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) - An infection in a wound or in the blood caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria.
- Surgical Site Infection (SSI) - An infection that occurs after surgery, at the site where the surgery took place.
- Ventilator associated pneumonia (VAP) - A lung infection that can occur in a person who is on a ventilator.

##### How are Healthcare Associated Infections spread?

HAIs can be spread in a number of ways. They can be spread by person-to-person contact, such as from the hands of a healthcare worker or a visitor, or they can be spread by touching contaminated surfaces like doorknobs and bed rails. Other HAIs are associated with the use of certain medical devices such as ventilators and catheters.

### **Who is at risk for Healthcare Associated Infections?**

Any hospitalized person can be at risk for developing an HAI. The young and the elderly, as well as any other patients who have a weakened immune system are particularly at risk. In addition, anyone who has been on antibiotics recently or during their hospital stay might also be at risk for developing an HAI.

### **How do I know if I have an HAI?**

An HAI can present itself in a variety of different ways, and often times your healthcare provider will need to perform a test in order to be sure you have an HAI. They might take a blood sample, urine sample, stool sample, or a skin swab to determine if you have an HAI.

### **What are the symptoms of HAIs?**

HAIs can cause a wide range of symptoms depending on where the infection occurs. You might experience fever, pain, redness, or swelling if the infection is at a surgical site or near a central line. If the infection is in the intestines or bowel, you might experience diarrhea and abdominal pain.

### **How can HAIs be treated?**

Each HAI is different, so your healthcare provider will determine the appropriate course of treatment for your particular infection. The treatment may involve prescribing medication or the removal of the catheter, ventilator, or central line.

### **How are HAIs prevented?**

The best way to prevent HAIs is by using proper hand hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. In addition to proper hand hygiene, healthcare workers and care providers might use a cap, gown, gloves, and/or mask. Proper environmental cleaning is also a way to prevent HAIs. A healthcare facility's environmental cleaning staff should pay special attention to high-touch areas in a person's room,

such as doorknobs, telephones, and bathrooms. Proper antibiotic use is also very important in preventing HAIs. The overuse or misuse of antibiotics can lead to germ resistance, which can put you at increased risk for HAI's. For this reason, you should use antibiotics as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information about Healthcare Associated Infections, please refer to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hai/>

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/24769.htm>

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